

XIV. *Extract of a Letter from Mr. Leonard Euler, Prof. Mathem. and Member of the Imperial Society at Petersburg, to the Rev. Mr. Cha. Wetstein, Chaplain and Secretary to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, concerning the Discoveries of the Russians on the North-East Coast of Asia.*

Berlin, Dec. 10. 1746.

Read Feb. 5. —
1746 7.

AS you are desirous to hear something more particular concerning the *Russian* Expeditions to the North and North-East of *Asia*, I will here give you an Account of all that has come to my Knowledge relating to the same. But as I should, on the one hand, be very glad that these Observations might give any Light concerning the Passage now sought through *Hudson's Bay*, I should, on the other be very sorry, if Mr. *Behring's* Opinion, who believed that the new Land he had discovered was joined to *California*, should rather lead us to doubt of the Success of that glorious Undertaking. I wish, however, that a happy Experiment may soon inform us certainly of the Truth. In the mean time you will not be sorry to be acquainted with the Reasons upon which Mr. *Behring's* Suspicions were founded, notwithstanding the Objections you have been pleased to make, and to communicate to me upon that Head.

First, This new Land, which he fell in with at the Distance of 50 *German* Miles from *Kamschatka* towards the East, was followed by him, and coasted
for

for a great Way, tho' I cannot say how far : From whence alone it will appear, that an Abatement must be made in the Distance of 30 Degrees, or thereabouts, which you suppose to be between the last known Head-Land of *California* towards the West, and the farthest Extremity of this new discovered Land towards the East.

Secondly, Capt. *Behring* having had the Opportunity of observing an Eclipse of the Moon as *Kamschatka*, concluded from the same, that that Place lay much farther off to the East, than is expressed in any Map ; and that, to represent it truly, it ought to be transferred into the other Hemisphere, as its Longitude is more than 180 Degrees [East from the Isle of *Ferro*]. For this Reason Captain *Behring's* new Land will be considerably approached to the last known Part of *California*, and will not indeed appear to be many Degrees from it.

What we have therefore still to hope is only, that in this unknown District there may be found some Streight, by which the *Pacific Sea* may freely communicate with *Hudson's Bay* ; but if it shall appear that there is no such Passage, it must then be concluded, that whatever further Progress may happen to be made through *Hudson's Bay*, the Opening at last must only be into the *Frozen Sea*, from whence there could be no passing into the *Pacific Ocean*, but by the Neighbourhood of *Kamschatka* ; and this Way would without doubt be too long, and too dangerous, to be master'd in the Course of one Summer.

I very much doubt whether the *Russians* will ever publish the Particulars of their Discoveries, either such as have been made from *Kamschatka* towards

wards *America*, or such as have been made upon the Northern Coasts of *Asia*. And indeed it is but very much in general that I know the Success of this last Expedition. What I do was communicated to me by Order of the Court, from the College of Admiralty, for me to make use of it in the Geography of *Russia*, which I was at that time charged with.

They passed along in small Vessels, coasting between *Nova Zemla* and the Continent, at divers times, in the middle of Summer, when those Waters are open. The first Expedition was from the River *Oby*; and at the Approach of Winter the Vessels shelter'd themselves by going up the *Jeniska*; from whence the next Summer they returned to Sea, in order to advance further Eastward; which they did to the Mouth of the *Lena*, into which they again retired for the Winter-Season.

The third Expedition was from this River, to the farthest North-East Cape of *Asia*. But here they lost several of their Boats, and a great Part of their Crew, so as to be disabled from proceeding, and from making the whole Tour, so as to arrive at *Kamtschatka*.

It was however thought, that a further Attempt was then unnecessary, because Captain *Behring* had already gone round that Cape, sailing Northward from *Kamtschatka*.

The *Russians* have not attempted the Passage round *Nova Zemla*; but as they have passed between that Land and the Coast of *Asia*, and as the *Dutch* did formerly discover the Northern Coasts of *Nova Zemla*, we may now be well assured, that that Country is really an Island.